
**Special Town Meeting
December 9, 2002**

The meeting was televised by Amherst Community Television and shown on the Government Channel.

The Special Town Meeting was called to order by the Moderator, Harrison Gregg at 7:44 p.m. There were 230 town meeting members. 116 checked in and a quorum was declared. The call and return of the warrant were read by Town Clerk, Margaret Z. Nartowicz.

ARTICLE 1. Petition – Special Act – Bilingual Education
(Not In Our Town, Puerto Rican Association, Amherst Voting Rights Campaign,
Multilingual Coalition)

VOTED that the town adopt the following resolution and request to the Select Board to seek a special act from the General Court:

Whereas, the town of Amherst voted overwhelmingly to reject Question 2 at the November 5, 2002 General Election; and,

Whereas, the Amherst School District has Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs in each of its four elementary schools – Spanish in Crocker Farm, Khmer in Fort River, Korean in Marks Meadow, and Chinese in Wildwood; and,

Whereas, the Amherst School District and Amherst-Pelham Regional School District have English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in all their schools; and,

Whereas, Question 2 would eliminate Transitional Bilingual Education programs and drastically affect ESL programs, replacing them with a one-year, one-size-fits-all English immersion program; and,

Whereas, the Larkin-Antonioni Bill reforming bilingual education, An Act Relative to Enhancing English Opportunities for All Students in the Commonwealth, was passed by the General Court and signed by the Acting Governor in August of 2002; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Amherst Representative Town Meeting requests the Amherst Select Board to file as promptly as is possible with the General Court separate requests for special acts to exempt the Amherst School District and the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District from any impact whatsoever of Question 2 of the November 2002 General Election and to allow each school district to continue to educate children whose primary language is not English in accordance with the provisions of the Larkin-Antonioni Bill and other applicable state and federal laws.
Action taken on 12/9/02.

ARTICLE 2. Resolution – Bilingual Education (School Committee)

Voted to dismiss. [To see if the Town will adopt the following resolution:

Whereas, the programs for teaching English to non-English speaking students specified in Ballot Question #2, passed by the voters in the November 2002 election, are unproven and are considered controversial by many education experts; and,

Whereas, the changes in the bilingual education law enacted earlier in 2002 by the Massachusetts Legislature have not yet taken effect and have not yet been able to demonstrate their impact on improving bilingual education success in the schools; and,

Whereas, many school districts, including Amherst, do not want their bilingual education programs that have proven successful to be replaced with the unproven and less flexible “sheltered immersion” program specified in Ballot Question #2; and,

Whereas, at the last convention of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC), the members voted overwhelmingly against enacting Ballot Question #2; and,

Whereas, the statistics analyzing the success of a similar, but less rigid, program in California are ambiguous and unconvincing; and,

Whereas, all of the towns in the Amherst and Amherst-Pelham Regional school districts voted overwhelmingly against Ballot Question #2;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Town of Amherst requests that Senator Stan Rosenberg and Representative Ellen Story support the enactment of the bilingual education reforms voted by the Legislature and signed by the governor in the summer of 2002, and that they use their full influence to prevent Ballot Question #2 from being enacted into law,

And be it furthermore resolved that the Town of Amherst urges the Great and General Court to repeal the Ballot Question #2 initiative,

And be it further resolved the Town Clerk of Amherst is directed to convey copies of this resolution to all Massachusetts Senators and Representatives, to the Governor, and to the Governor-Elect.]

Action taken on 12/9/02.

The business of the warrant having been completed, the meeting voted to dissolve at 8:52 p.m. on December 9, 2002. 138 town meeting members were checked in.

Attest:

Margaret Z. Nartowicz
Town Clerk